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ABSTRACT

Intended as a curriculum development aid for speech communication instructors, this paper provides an outline model for basic speech competencies. The first section of the outline offers approaches to the basic speech communication course, including traditional versus competency-based approaches to education, and presents the three dimensions of a competency-based model of speech instruction. The second major section provides definitions of competence, while the third section elaborates on the definitions and dimensions of communication competence. The fourth major section details the different levels of competency, including generic, definitive, and enabling competencies, and the fifth presents suggestions for ways to describe competence, including criteria, standards, and conditions. The paper concludes with a detailed description of an enabling competence for an introductory speech course, first for planned, purposeful interaction, then for small group discussion. (HTH)

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A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING SPEECH COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES IN THE BASIC SPEECH COURSE

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A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING SPEECH COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES IN THE BASIC SPEECH COURSE

I. Approaches to the Basic Speech Communication Course.

A. Traditional versus Competency-based Approaches to Education.

1. Traditional approaches are designed to determine a student's performance in relation to the performance of others in the same course. (Allen, Willmington, & Sprague, 1976)

a. The assumption is that a student is "ready" if he or she completes a specified number of courses. (Zimmerman, 1980)
b. Some other assumptions (Smythe, Kibler, & Hutchings, 1973)

1. Students enter the course with the same speaking competencies and experiences.
2. Course objectives are stated in terms of the number of activities to be completed and the amount of material to be covered.
3. Student activities and test performances are evaluated on the basis of peer comparisons (norm-referenced).
4. The criteria for mastery is not usually specified before the student is evaluated.

2. Competency-based approaches are designed to determine whether a student has achieved mastery of a behavior at a given criterion level. (Allen, Willmington, & Sprague, 1976)

a. The assumption is that performance is the only true index of "readiness." (I.e., completion of course work is insufficient evidence of communication competence.) (Zimmerman, 1980)
b. This approach measures mastery at an absolute standard and does not attempt to differentiate or discriminate among students.
c. Some other assumptions (Smythe, Kibler, & Hutchings, 1973):

1. Students enter the course at various levels of speaking competencies and experiences.
2. Course objectives are stated behaviorally in terms of the terminal performance to be achieved.
3. Student activities and tests are evaluated on the basis of behavioral objectives (criterion-referenced).
4. The criteria for mastery are clearly specified before the student is evaluated.

B. There are three dimensions to a competency-based model of speech communication instruction. (Zimmerman, 1980)

1. There must be an emphasis on how students use their knowledge and skills. The focus is on doing more than knowing.

2. There must be a systematic way of determining what is important to learn and what should be the result of the educational process.

3. There must be a systematic way of determining what students have learned and are able to do.

II. Definitions of Competence.

A. Competence generally refers to the ability of a person to meet the demands of a situation and to exhibit socially appropriate behavior. The competent person is one who has the knowledge and skill to interact effectively with the environment and, in the process, is able to maintain or enhance his or her existence. (Larson et al., 1978)

1. Competence refers to an organisms capacity to interact effectively with his or her environment. (White, 1959)

2. Competence refers to the fitness or ability of a living organism "to carry on those transactions with the environment which results in its maintaining itself, growing, and flourishing." (Argyris, 1965)

3. Competence refers to "the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to carry out properly an activity important to success in one's personal or professional life; and the ability to meet or surpass prevailing standards of adequacy for a particular activity." (Butler. 1978)

4. Competence is "the demonstrated ability to perform or accomplish a task, activity or project by oneself or with others." (Ingalls, 1979)

B. Competence involves at least four interdependent dimensions (Butler, 1978; Zimmerman, 1980):

1. Knowledge (the mental processing of information).

a. This refers to the cognitive or informational basis of a skill.

1. Identification, differentiation, concepts, rules, principles, processes, and strategies.
2. The who, what, when, where, how and why.

b. It involves recalling what was read, listened to, or observed, since we probably have not learned what we have not remembered.

2. Skill (the ability to perform a task or activity with proficiency)

a. This involves the application of knowledge and process to a task.

1. The ability to do or to behave in a particular manner.
2. For example...
   . the ability to establish rapport in an interpersonal setting.
   . the ability to ask open questions and probe for additional information.

. the ability to organize information so that others can understand it.

b. Skills can be taught and learned.

1. Scheffler (1965) believes that skills are "typically built up through repeated trials or performance."
2. The implication is that emphasis must be placed on the ability to "perform," as well as on the level of cognitive understanding.

3. Value (a psychologically integrated belief)

a. This refers to ideals, purposes, concepts, and principles held in high regard, or of particular importance and worth to the individual, a group, a society, or culture.
b. For example...
1. The belief that openness and availability to others enhances relationships.
2. The belief that democratic leadership is the best way to lead a group because it generally promotes more group-mindedness and friendliness.

4. Interest (underlying motivation and desire)

a. This refers to a person's psychological orientation.
b. For example...
1. A good public speaker is enthusiastic about making an effective presentation.
2. A good interviewer is interested in other people.

C. Some examples of competency as a dynamic interplay of knowledge, skills, values and interest.

1. There are students who can list all of the factors necessary for effective listening but do not care about being attentive or understanding when they interact with others or listen to a speech. I would argue that they are not competent communicators because there is an obvious lack of value and interest.

2. To repeatedly give successful public speeches you must merge understanding with the practice which comes from giving public speeches. Theory without the proper skill is insufficient.

III. Definitions and Dimensions of Communication Competence.

A. "Communication competence is the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the communicative behavior socially appropriate in a given situation." It involves five specific factors. (Larson et al., 1978)

1. Linguistic competence: The speaker-listener's knowledge of the proper structure and usage of language. Linguistic competence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for communication competence.

2. Performance: The speaker-listener's ability to perform a set of skills.

3. Contextuality: The ability to meet the communication demands of the verbal, relational, and environmental contexts.

4. Appropriateness: A knowledge of relevant cultural, group, and relationship norms. Competence may be determined on the basis of how well an individual fulfills the norms of a particular group or culture.

5. Accomplishment: The ability to facilitate the attainment of a goal.

B. Wells (1973) identified five categories of communication competence.

1. Controlling: When a person's purpose is to control the behavior of others. This involves commanding, suggesting, persuading and, arguing.

2. Feeling: When a person's purpose is to express feelings and attitudes. This involves exclaiming, commiserating, tale-telling and blaming.

3. Informing: When a person's purpose is to offer or seek information. This involves stating information, questioning, answering, demonstrating, and explaining.

4. Ritualizing: When a person's purpose is to maintain social relationships and facilitate social interaction. This involves greeting and leave-taking, taking turns in conversations, and demonstrating culturally appropriate amenities.

5. Imagining: When a person's purpose is to deal creatively with reality. This involves role-playing, dramatizing, fantasizing, and storytelling.

C. Allen and Brown (1977) suggest that communication competence involves four specific features.

1. An individual must develop and perform a broad and flexible repertoire of behaviors.
2. An individual must make appropriate choices from his or her behavioral repertoire.
3. An individual must possess the verbal and nonverbal skills to carry these choices into action.
4. An individual must be able to objectively evaluate his or her performance.

D. Bochner and Kelly (1974) suggest that interpersonal communication competence can be judged by the following criteria:

1. The ability to formulate and achieve objectives.
2. The ability to collaborate effectively with others.
3. The ability to adapt appropriately to situational or environmental variations.

IV. Levels of Competency--how broadly or how narrowly does one describe a particular competence? (Butler, 1978)

A. The degree of specificity depends on the particular educational purpose.

1. The broader the educaticnal purpose, the broader the description of the competence. The narrower the educational purpose, the narrower the description of the competence.

a. Two related trends are involved--both the knowledge and the skill components proceed from the very general to the very specific.

b. The categories of competence range from highly generalizable skills which can be applied to any context, to narrow and less generalizable skills which are context specific.

B. General competencies.

1. Generic Competencies (Basic)

a. The fundamental basis of all learned communication activities.

b. Examples (Dance & Larson, 1972):

1. Can use language to differentiate self from environment and establish links between self and others.

2. Can use language to sharpen and facilitate reasoning and aid in learning and problem-solving.

3. Can use language to regulate the behavior of self and attempts to regulate the behavior of others.

2. Definitive Competencies (Global)

a. A description of competence derived from institutional goals.

1. They are global in that they are deemed universal to the needs of students enrolled in an educational program.

2. They are definitive in that they define the general content of the curriculum, and reflect the concept that life is a continuous process of learning and developing.

b. Definitive competencies describe the process for accomplishing a worthwhile goal and the goal itself.

1. They describe in general terms what is meant by competent performance, but do not specify criteria and standards.

2. They can be acquired and applied in a wide range of contexts.

c. Examples: A sample set of definitive competencies for a degree in speech communication.

1. Self understanding: Can assess one's wants, needs, feelings, and intentions so as to enhance self awareness and conscious intent.

2. Disclosing: Can reveal information about self that would otherwise be unknown to a listener so as to foster accepting and caring relationships.

3. Decentering: Can distinguish between self and others and become aware that others may have feelings, talents, interests, beliefs, likes and dislikes different from one's own.
4. Empathy: Can project self as completely as possible into the role of another so as to facilitate interpersonal understanding.
5. Describing: Can use verbal and nonverbal modes of communication to clarify emotions and enhance degrees of mutual understanding.
6. Interaction: Can establish and maintain a smooth and easy pattern of purposeful interaction without dominating the other person.
7. Collaborating: Can participate actively and sensitively as both a group member and a group leader in order to facilitate group functioning.
8. Problem-solving: Can employ appropriate problem-solving methods so as to promote necessary change.
9. Informing: Can speak logically and clearly in a variety of speaking situations.
10. Controlling: Can speak knowledgeably and persuasively about major issues and support one's personal opinions with relevant examples and illustrations.
11. Helping: Can appropriately and thoughtfully help others improve their speech communication skills.

3. Enabling Competencies (Educative)

a. A description of competence at the departmental level.

1. Enabling competencies describe, in general terms, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and context through which students can demonstrate the definitive competencies.
2. Enabling competencies require criterion referenced evaluations (i.e., criteria, standards, and conditions students must meet when demonstrating their competence).

b. Examples: A partial listing of the sub-components of the definitive competencies listed above. (Derived, in part, from Adler & Towne, 1981; Allen & McKerrow, 1977; Patton & Giffin, 1981).

1. Self-awareness...
   - Can describe self.
   - Can recognize any differences between how one views self and how self is viewed by others.
   - Can identify and eliminate any irrational thoughts which hamper one's personal growth and development.
   - Can identify the defense mechanisms used in one's relationships and the consequences of this behavior.
   - Can increase the accuracy of one's self-concept by recognizing personal strengths and accomplishments.

2. Disclosing...

   . Can develop clear, complete messages about self and one's experiences.
   . Can clearly and appropriately express one's attitudes or feelings to another person.
   . Can voluntarily express unmet interpersonal needs.

3. Decentering...

   . Can understand and explain any differences in perception that exist between self and others as a first step in resolving interpersonal conflict.
   . Can examine an issue from a perspective other than one's own.
   . Can check the accuracy of one's perceptions in order to reduce the number of mistaken interpretations.
   . Can tailor a message to accommodate the respondent's needs and interests.

4. Empathizing...

   . Can respond in a variety of ways (depending on the situation) to another person's problems.
   . Can provide complete and correct active listening responses to others.
   . Can correctly identify the feelings that are implied but not directly stated by others.

5. Describing...

   . Can give descriptive, non-evaluative feedback when interacting with others in order to reduce defensiveness and increase interpersonal trust.
   . Can own and take responsibility for feelings and actions by using the pronoun "I".
   . Can use behavioral descriptions rather than overly abstract language when discussing goals or solving problems.
   . Can observe and describe the nonverbal behavior of self and others.
   . Can match one's verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotion so as to reinforce a message.

6. Interacting...

   . Can use appropriate verbal and nonverbal rituals to initiate and terminate conversations.
   . Can establish and maintain a relaxing social climate.
   . Can use purposeful questions in order to maintain a conversation.
   . Can interact without interrupting the other person and without frequent and lengthy pauses.
   . Can devote full attention to the other person during the interaction.

7. Collaborating...

   . Can relate to others as equals and as having worth as human beings.
   . Can clearly identify the group task and help overcome any confusion among group members.
   . Can discuss the group task using factual information.
   . Can perform appropriate and needed leadership functions in a small group setting.
   . Can promote group cohesiveness.
   . Can handle or resolve conflict.

8. Problem-solving...

   . Can clearly identify the group problem(s).
   . Can analyze the size and scope of the problem using factual information.
   . Can help the group evaluate proposals to the problem and make a final decision.
   . Can give support and assistance to implement a group decision when it is reached.

9. Informing...

   . Can select a topic you feel qualified to talk about.
   . Can construct a 5-6 minute speech demonstrating clear and vivid language.
   . Can employ the use of appropriate expository devices (i.e., definitions, examples, statistics, quotations, visual materials, repetitions, descriptions).
   . Can organize materials for the speech in a chronological, spatial, or topical sequence.
   . Can construct and deliver an introduction that creates audience interest in the topic and previews the major ideas to be developed.
   . Can construct a conclusion that summarizes the major ideas presented in the speech.
   . Can use appropriate facial expression, eye contact, gesture, and bodily movement when delivering a speech.
   . Can analyze the speeches of classmates using the informative speech evaluation form.

10. Controlling...

   . Can choose from available evidence that which best supports your position.
   . Can organize materials for the speech in a problem-solution pattern or a motivated sequence.
   . Can construct a speech introduction utilizing a credibility-building strategy.
   . Can adapt room arrangements and conditions to promote more effective communication
   . Can use variety in loudness, pitch, quality and rate when delivering a persuasive speech.
   . Can analyze the speeches of classmates using the persuasive speech evaluation form.

11. Helping...

- Can provide non-evaluative, descriptive feedback to effect change in another person's communication behavior.
- Can use a recognized communication method to improve a relationship with another person.
- Can provide a model which will illustrate ways others can change their communication behavior.

C. Specific Competencies

1. Learning Objectives (a description of a competency at the course level).

a. Learning objectives describe the particular subject matter and the specific skills through which an enabling competence is to be addressed.

1. They are the knowledge and skills that must be displayed when demonstrating the competence.
2. They are directly derived from the set of criteria already established for the competence.

b. For example, learning objectives for the following enabling competencies might be:

1. "Can describe self."

- Can supply words or phrases that best describe you.
- Can organize your responses so that the most important term is listed first, with the rest of the items following respectively.

2. "Can develop clear, complete messages about self and one's experiences."

- Can discuss significant interpersonal events which were experienced recently.
- Can describe the feelings which resulted from each event.

2. Behavioral Objectives (a description of a competency at the learning module level).

a. Behavioral objectives describe the very specific knowledge and skill components that result from breaking down the learning objectives.

1. They describe exactly what students are to do, exactly how well they are to do it, and under what conditions.
2. They read like test items.

b. They are the end process of a curriculum that proceeds from the most general competence description to the most specific.

c. For example, the following might be included:

1. Can supply words or phases that best describe you.

. Can identify twenty elements of your self-concept that describe feelings, physical appearance, social traits, talents, intellectual capacity, beliefs, and social roles.
. Can arrange these self-concept elements in order of importance.

2. Can discuss significant interpersonal events which were experienced recently.

. Can explain to a close friend three significant interpersonal events which were experienced in the last 2 weeks.
. Can explain to a more distant acquaintance three significant interpersonal events which were experience in the last week.
. Can identify any feelings you had that accompanied these three events.
. Can describe the consequences or results of each event and what, if anything, you will do differently in the future.

V. Describing Competence (Butler, 1980)

A. The final most important step in the process of curriculum development is to describe competent performance in functional terms, or to establish the criteria, standards, and conditions for each enabling competence.

1. There are three major categories of competent performance.

a. Criteria (qualitative): What knowledge and skill is to be demonstrated.

1. The specific kinds of knowledge required. The cognitive information on which students are to be checked.
2. The specific kinds of skill required. The particular activity that is to be enacted.

b. Standards (quantitative): How well the knowledge and skills is to be demonstrated.

1. The amount of knowledge required. The amount of related and background information needed.
2. The range of application. The context to be dealt with, the amount of detail and accuracy required, the total time required, and the kind of documentation required for facts, data, statements, and references.

c. Conditions (regulative): The conditions under which the demonstration is to be carried out.

1. The degree of self-sufficiency. The degree to which students have to carry out the demonstration without advance knowledge of the specific context, assistance, or supervision.
2. Level of authority. The level of supervision or direction the student must exercise over others.

2. These components of competency form a hierarchy. Each is dependent on the one preceding it. (I.e., the lack of a basic information limits the ability to carry out the activity; the lack of skill in carrying out the activity limits the ability to draw upon related background knowledge, etc.)

3. These components form the core of what is meant by accountability.

B. Operationalizing Competence

1. Descriptions should be presented in a logical and concise format.

2. Outline for preparing the description of an enabling competence.

a. Competence Title
b. Rationale: A justification for the competence explaining its short- and long-term utility.
c. Competence: A brief description of the competence at the definitive level.
d. Standards: A detailed description of the levels of accuracy and performance required.
e. Evaluation Methods: Suggestions for methods of evaluation.
f. Conditions: A description of the limitations under which the student will have to operate while being evaluated.

3. For example...

Detailed Description of an Enabling Competence
for an Introductory Speech Course

COMPETENCE TITLE: Planned, purposeful interaction

RATIONALE: We spend so much of our daily lives participating in interactions with others that we take the process for granted. We assume that it comes naturally and requires little, if any, formal training. This competence is designed to show that there is a major difference between the effectiveness of skilled and unskilled interaction. The purpose of this competence is to introduce you to the basic skills applicable to all purposeful interaction.

COMPETENCE: Can establish and maintain a smooth and easy pattern of purposeful interaction without dominating the other person.

CRITERIA: Your participation must include the following (see Wiemann, 1977):

1. A structured opening to the interaction.
2. An interpersonal climate that nurtures feelings of trust and goodwill between the participants.
3. A well-prepared and structured interaction guide outlining the primary and secondary questions to be asked.
4. An appropriate sharing of the amount of speaking time.
5. Empathic listening responses.
6. A flexibility to adapt to different respondents and situations.
7. A method for recording the information received.
8. A final evaluation of the interaction.

STANDARDS:

1. Opening must include:
   - a statement of the purpose of the interaction and description of the specific information desired.
   - nonverbal behaviors to demonstrate an appropriate degree of liking and support (i.e., direct eye contact, head nods, smiles, and close physical proximity).
   - words that are appropriate to the formality of the relationship between parties (i.e., Sir, Mrs., Professor versus first names).

2. Interpersonal climate must be characterized by:
   - cues that allow the other person to relax (i.e., reduced anxiety, direct and open posture, forward leaning).
   - steady rate of speech and smooth and fluent delivery.
   - supportive rather than evaluative or critical speech (i.e., description, problem orientation, spontaneity, equality, provisionalism).

3. Questions must be:
   - organized in a chronological or topical sequence.
   - clearly understandable to the respondent.
   - specific and avoid overly abstract terminology.
   - relevant to the stated purpose and topic.

4. Student must avoid:
   - interrupting the speaker.
   - frequent and lengthy pauses or hesitations.

5. Listening responses must include:
   - appropriate verbal statements of feelings (i.e., paraphrasing and reflecting).
   - nonverbal attention to the speaker (i.e., eye contact, head nods, direct body orientation).

6. Flexibility must include:
   - probing questions to obtain additional information and clarification.
   - a style of interaction that is harmonious with your own personal needs and the needs of your partner.

7. Record of the interaction should:
   . be in the form of written notes taken after the interaction.
   . indicate clearly that you have been listening to your partner during the interaction.

8. Final evaluation of the interaction must include an oral and written assessment of:
   . the positive and negative aspects of the interaction.
   . your strengths and weaknesses as an interactant.
   . the results of the interaction.

METHOD OF EVALUATION: You must provide (1) a written interaction guide outlining the topic and subtopics to be covered in your interaction, (2) a written record of the interaction summarizing the information obtained,(3) an oral and written assessment of the positive and negative aspects of the interaction, your strengths and weaknesses as an interactant, and the results of the interaction. Additionally, you must obtain a form from your instructor for evaluating your partner's competence in carrying out the interaction.

CONDITIONS:

1. The interaction must take place in the classroom.
2. The interaction must be 20-25 minutes in length.
3. The interaction must be completed with students who are not previously acquainted.
4. The interaction may be completed in small groups and evaluated by its members.

Detailed Description of an Enabling Competence
for an Introductory Speech Course

COMPETENCE TITLE: Small Group Discussion

RATIONALE: We spend a great amount of time in various types of groups. However we rarely take the time to observe how we behave in a small group setting. This competence is designed to show that there are important task and interpersonal behaviors that are typically performed in small groups. The purpose of this competence is to introduce you to the basic skills applicable to small group discussion.

COMPETENCE: Can participate actively and sensitively as both a group member and a group leader in order to facilitate group functioning.

CRITERIA: Your participation must include the following (see Patton and Giffin, 1981):

1. A cooperative group orientation that promotes feelings of trust and goodwill among group members.
2. A well-prepared and structured group agenda outlining topics and subtopics to be discussed.

3. Factual information to support your opinions, guesses, and assumptions.
4. Behavior related to the goals of the group.
5. Group-centered interpersonal behavior.
6. The ability to handle honest, reasonable disagreement on task or interpersonal issues.
7. A final evaluation of the discussion.

STANDARDS:

1. Group orientation must include:
   . nonverbal behavior that demonstrates an appropriate degree of liking, support, and emotional stability (i.e., direct eye contact, head nods, smiles, and close physical proximity).
   . Cues that allow other group members to relax (i.e., reduced anxiety, direct and open posture, forward leaning).
   . supportive rather than evaluative or critical speech (i.e., description, problem orientation, spontaneity, equality, and provisionalism).

2. Group agenda must include:
   . A statement of the purpose of the discussion and a description of realistic and obtainable goals.
   . A list of topics and subtopics to be discussed.

3. Information must include factual data in the form of expert testimony, illustrations, statistics, etc. from reliable and credible sources.

4. Functional behavior must include:
   . an appropriate amount of talking and being talked to.
   . the presentation of ideas and suggestions to aid in group goal attainment and guide group thinking.
   . the demonstration of sociability and emotional stability.
   . an agreement within the group about who will perform the needed leadership functions.

5. Group-centered behaviors must include:
   . the use of personal pronouns when referring to the group and its operations (i.e., "we," "our").
   . complete and correct active listening responses to others ideas and feelings.
   . participation in group traditions (i.e., ritualistic activites and performances).
   . appropriate support and praise for other group members.

6. Ability to handle disagreement must include:
   . the identification and discussion of unmet interpersonal needs.
   . a clear description of the problem from the perspective of both self and other.
   . perception checking and active listening to reduce the number of mistaken interpretations and inferences.
   . the creative negotiation of a solution.
   . a follow-up session to see if the solution is satisfying to all concerned.

7. Final evaluation of the group discussion must include an oral and written assessment of:
   . the positive and negative aspects of the discussion.
   . your strengths and weaknesses as a group member.
   . the results of the discussion.

METHOD OF EVALUATION: You must provide (1) a written group agenda outlining the major topics and subtopics to be discussed, (2) an oral and written assessment of the positive and negative aspects of the discussion, your strengths and weaknesses as a group member, and the results of the discussion, and (3) a written evaluation of each group member's competence in carrying out the discussion. Additionally, your instructor will evaluate your group performance and attest to your competence in carrying out the discussion. As an option, the discussion may be evaluated by another small group of studentswho form a circle around the target group and evaluate individual members.

CONDITIONS:

1. The discussion must take place in the classroom before other class members.
2. The discussion must be 25-30 minutes in length.

VI. Some advantages of a Competency-based Approach to the Basic Speech Course (Allen, Willmington, & Sprague, 1976).

   1. It satisfies accountability needs because it states actual behavioral results.
   2. It encourages students to focus on accomplishing the instructional objectives rather than on trying to do better than their classmates.
   3. It provides more of an opportunity for students to work at their own rate.
   4. It reduces anxiety by precisely detailing what a student must do to be successful.
   5. It facilitates teacher-student communication by minimizing power differences.

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